



## **Physician Assistant Workforce-2015**

Physician assistants (PAs) are medical practitioners who work under the supervision of a licensed physician. A PA's job duties involve: performing medical histories and physical examinations; ordering and interpreting lab and diagnostic tests; making a diagnosis; prescribing treatment and medication; providing education and counselling for both the patient and family; and following up with patients throughout their treatment. PAs are capable of working in all areas of medicine, including surgery, depending on their training and specialty. The supervising physician does not need to be present for the majority of services; however a consistent method of contact must be established between the physician and the PA as required by law. The extent of legal supervision is determined state to state.<sup>7</sup>

Physician assistants must have a combination of a bachelor's degree and approximately 2 years of healthcare experience before attending an accredited PA program. On average, PA programs are 3 academic years (26 months) including class work and 2,000 hours of clinical rotations to receive a master's degree. The participants then must take the Physician Assistant National Certifying Exam (PANCE) administered by the National Commission on Certification of Physician Assistants (NCCPA); and be licensed by the state before practicing. Certification must be maintained by completing 100 hours of continuing medical education (CME) credits every two years and passing the Physician Assistant National Recertifying Exam (PANRE) every 10 years.<sup>1,2</sup>

There are 4 accredited PA schools in Missouri:<sup>8</sup>

- |                                      |             |
|--------------------------------------|-------------|
| • Missouri State University          | Springfield |
| • Saint Louis University             | St. Louis   |
| • University of Missouri             | Columbia    |
| • University of Missouri-Kansas City | Kansas City |

### **Overall**

As part of the licensing process, licensees are required to provide general demographic information from which this analysis is based. Information on licensees is current as of 6/15/2015 and was obtained through the publicly reported records of the Missouri Advisory Commission for Physician Assistants.

There are 987 physician assistants licensed by the State of Missouri. Of these, 640 list a current Missouri business address. Due to section 334.001 RSMo, home addresses are not to be released publicly; therefore, location information is not available for 272 licensed Missouri PAs who have chosen to list their home address as their contact address.<sup>11</sup> Kansas and Illinois are the most frequently listed states outside of Missouri with 29 licensees residing in Kansas and 14 in Illinois. The fact that PAs must be licensed by the individual state they will be practicing in may contribute to the significant number of PAs that continue to be located in Missouri after completing school at one of the 4 accredited institutions in the state. Missouri currently has a population to physician assistant ratio of 9,474:1.<sup>12</sup>

Kansas employs 890 PAs and has a population to PA ratio of 3,262:1. Illinois employs 2,850 PAs with a population to PA ratio of 4,522:1.<sup>4,12</sup> In comparison with Kansas and Illinois, Missouri has significantly fewer resident PAs per person.

### Geographic Distribution

The distribution of PAs in Missouri is uneven. Currently 55 out of the 115 counties do not have a residing physician assistant. There are 484 resident PAs throughout the urban Missouri counties. Newton County has the lowest number with zero resident PAs and Buchanan and Cass both have only two. St. Louis County has the highest listing with 172 licensees. The remaining 156 resident PAs are distributed throughout the 41 rural counties that have been listed as current addresses.<sup>10</sup> Missouri has an urban population to PA ratio of 7,923:1 and a rural population to PA ratio of 14,286:1.<sup>12</sup> It is important to note that due to the number of licensees that did not list a current address, actual numbers and those portrayed in the analysis may vary slightly. Figure 1 illustrates the geographic distribution of resident Missouri PAs. Figure 2 displays PA employment and wage for the 4 largest Missouri cities as compared with an overall of nonmetropolitan areas. The higher numbers listed for certain regional areas in Figure 2 as compared with Figure 1 may be a representation of the licensed PAs whose current address is not listed publically and therefore not represented.

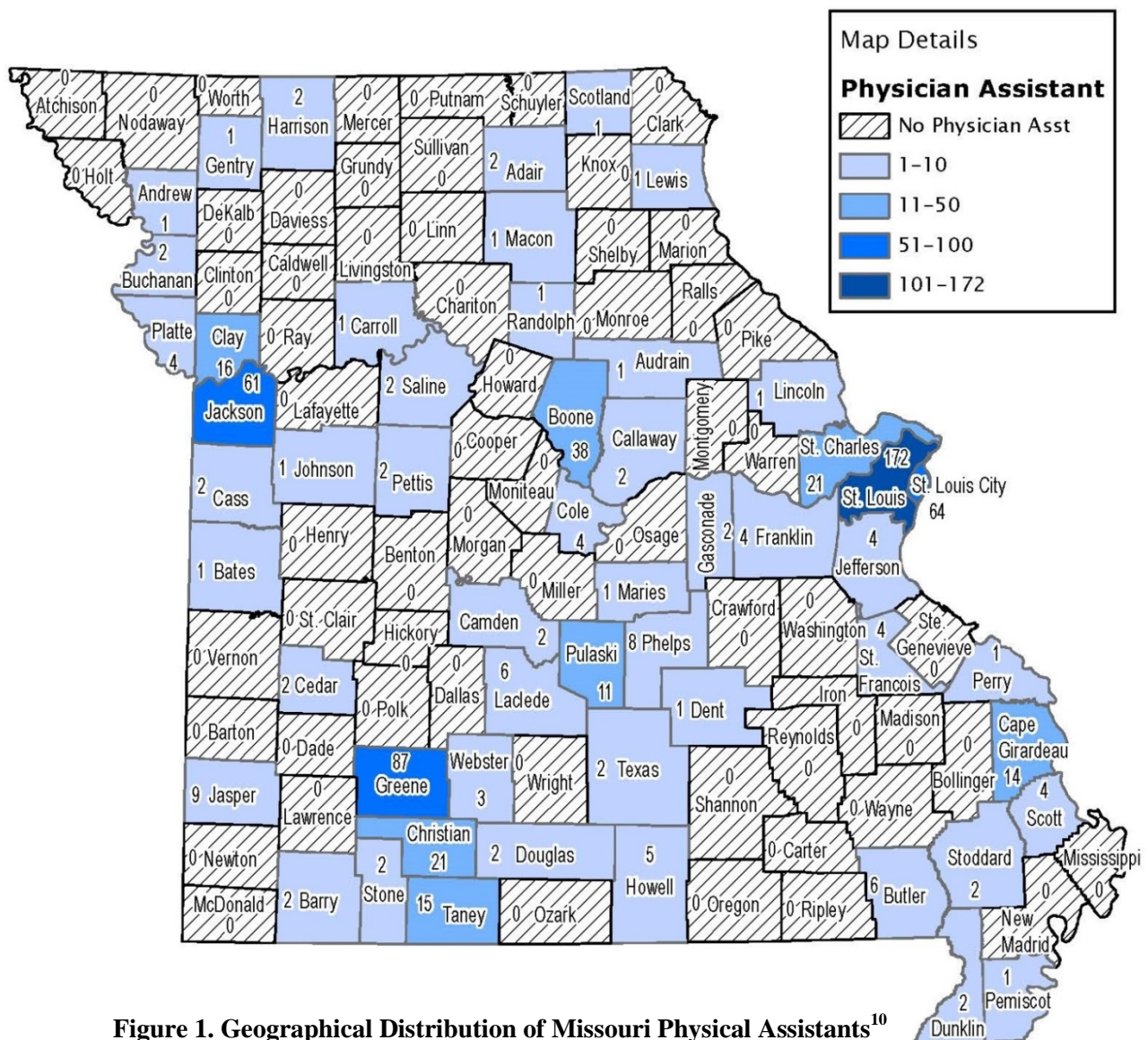


Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of Missouri Physical Assistants<sup>10</sup>

| Area                                  | Employment | Employment per 1,000 Jobs | Hourly Mean Wage | Annual Mean Wage |
|---------------------------------------|------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Central Missouri nonmetropolitan area | 40         | 0.229                     | \$45.59          | \$94,830         |
| Columbia                              | 80         | 0.926                     | \$35.52          | \$73,890         |
| Springfield                           | 130        | 0.692                     | \$40.05          | \$83,310         |
| Kansas City                           | 450        | 0.446                     | \$52.98          | \$110,210        |
| St. Louis                             | 750        | 0.577                     | \$43.00          | \$89,440         |

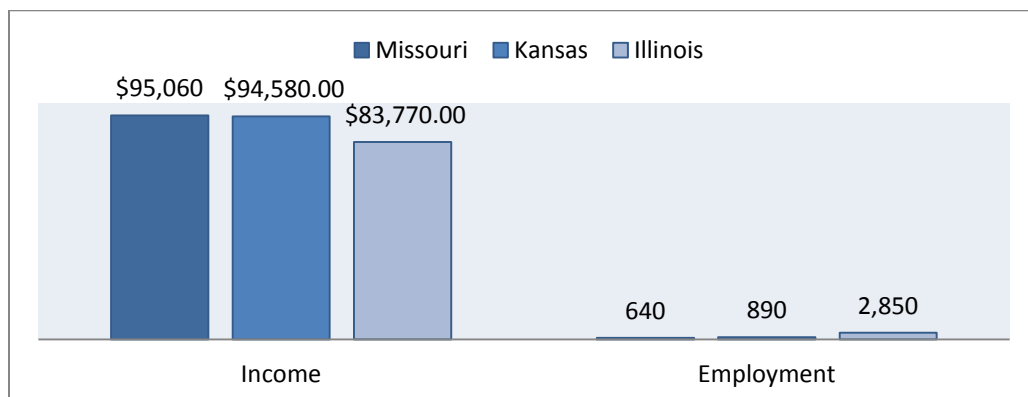
**Figure 2. Geographical Employment and Wages in Missouri<sup>5</sup>**

### Income

Nationally, the median annual pay for physician assistants is \$90,930.<sup>7</sup> The average PA salary in Missouri is \$95,060, although income varies slightly per region (Figure 3).<sup>4</sup> The average annual income for Kansas is comparable at \$94,580, however Illinois annual salary is significantly lower than Missouri's at \$83,770 (Figure 4).<sup>4</sup> Texas is currently listed as offering the highest annual wage with a mean of \$107,390.<sup>5</sup> Figure 5 shows the geographical distribution of national PA salaries.

| Area                                  | Annual 10 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Wage | Annual 25 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Wage | Annual Median Wage | Annual 75 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Wage | Annual 90 <sup>th</sup> Percentile Wage |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|--------------------|---|---|
| Columbia, MO                          | \$32,580                                | \$50,330                                | \$78,500           | \$94,410                                | \$110,600                               |
| Kansas City, MO                       | \$72,590                                | \$86,710                                | \$109,110          | \$134,160                               | \$148,220                               |
| St. Louis, MO                         | \$32,060                                | \$47,470                                | \$93,670           | \$120,350                               | \$144,150                               |
| Springfield, MO                       | \$66,010                                | \$77,050                                | \$86,370           | \$93,940                                | \$100,520                               |
| Central Missouri nonmetropolitan area | \$78,230                                | \$90,340                                | \$90,350           | \$10,4610                               | \$118,740                               |

**Figure 3. Occupational Employment Statistics May 2014<sup>5</sup>**



**Figure 4. Income and Employment Comparison<sup>4</sup>**

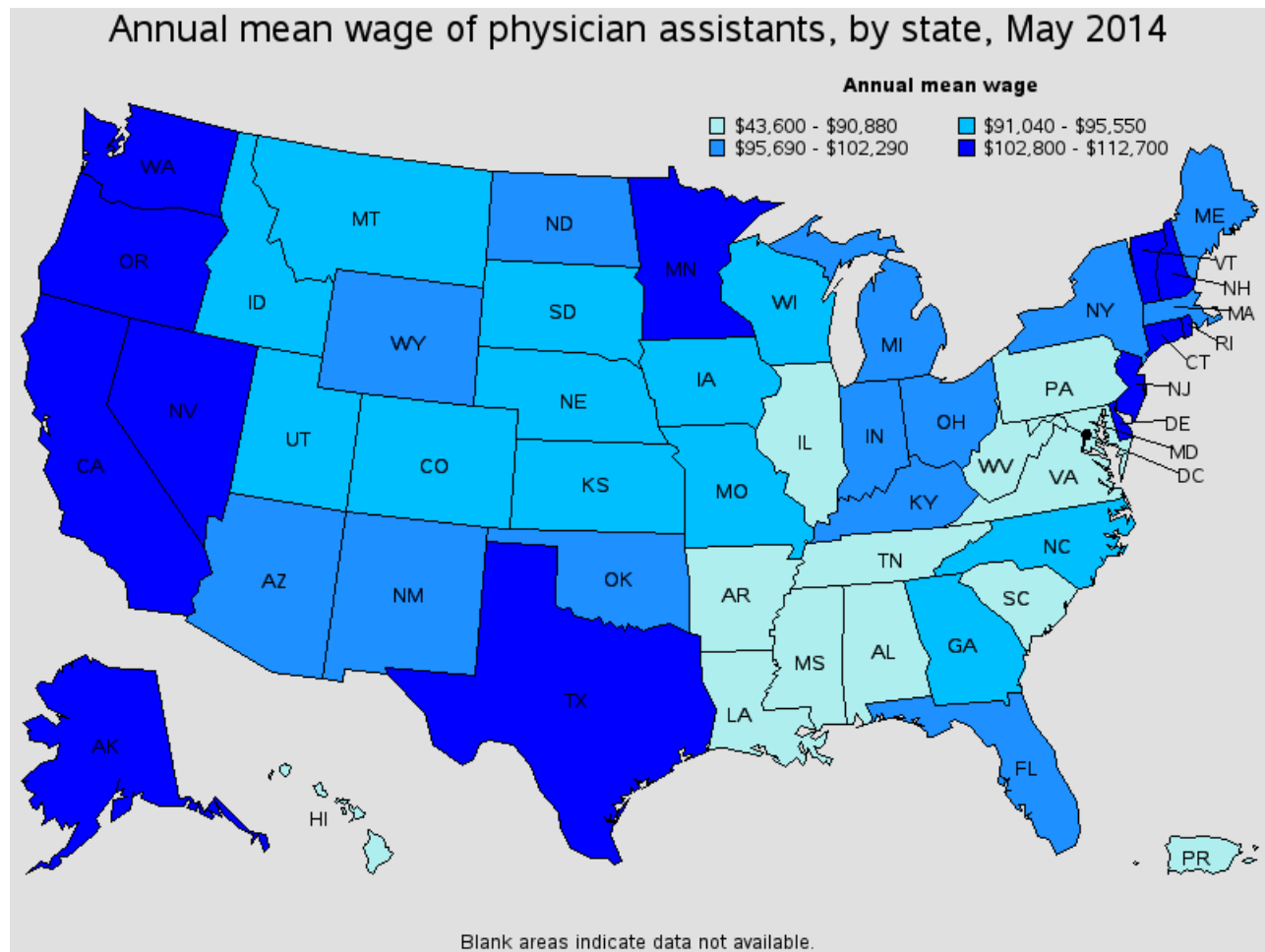


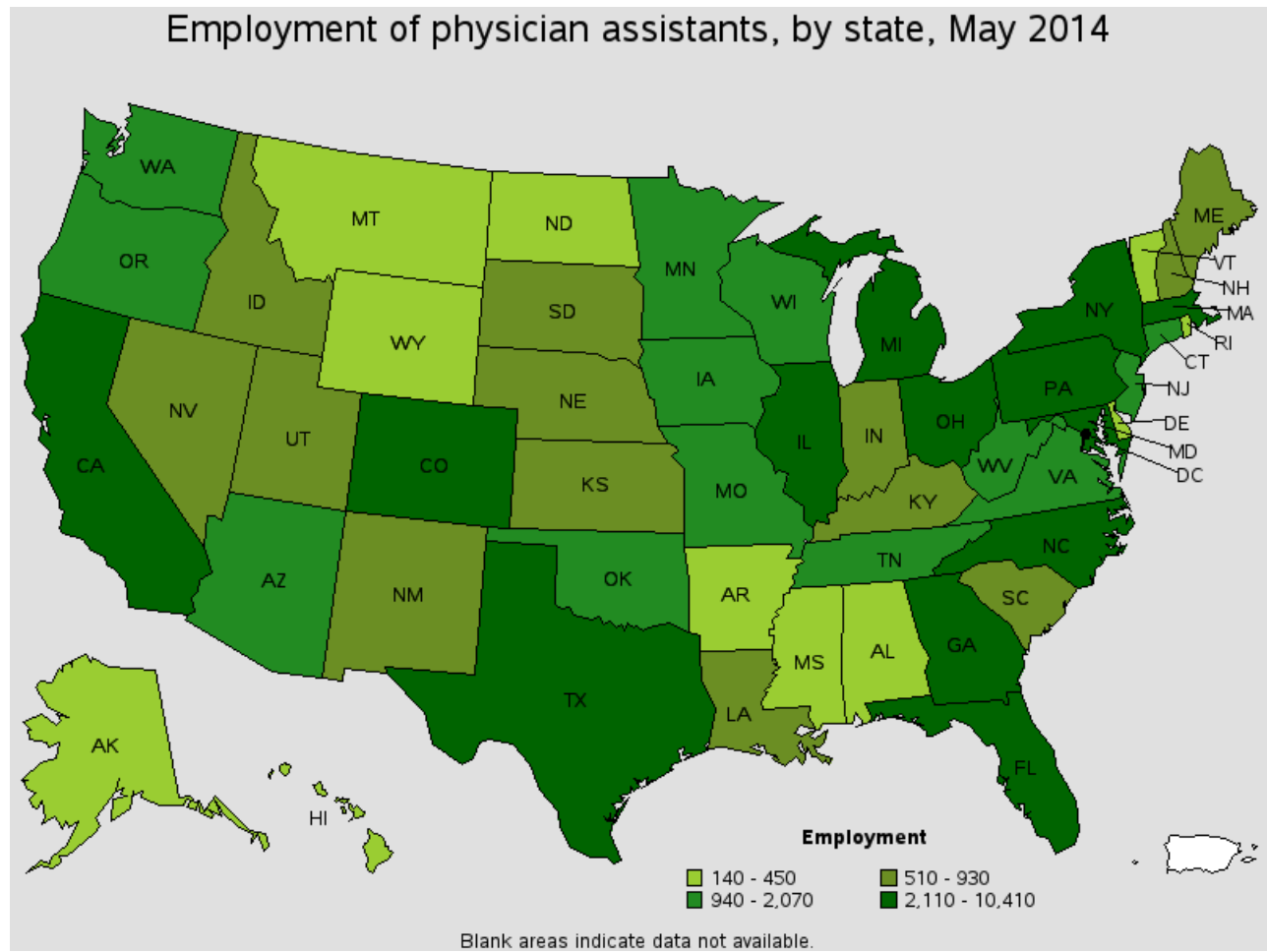
Figure 5. Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>5</sup>

### Industry Profile

Physician assistants work in 5 main professional industries: Offices of Physicians; General Medical and Surgical Hospitals; Outpatient Care Centers; College, Universities and Professional Schools; and the Federal Executive Branch.<sup>5</sup> Nationally, Physician offices employ the highest number of PA's (53,280) and the Federal Executive Branch employs the lowest (2,290).<sup>5</sup> Figure 6 portrays the distribution of PAs in the industry as well as the annual mean wage. In addition, the number of PAs currently employed varies greatly by state (Figure 7). New York State has the highest employment level with 10,140 practicing physician assistants.<sup>5</sup>

| Industry                                       | Employment | Percent of Industry Employment | Hourly Mean Wage | Annual Mean Wage |
|--|------------|--------------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| Offices of Physicians                          | 53,280     | 2.17                           | \$46.77          | \$97,270         |
| General Medical and Surgical Hospitals         | 19,810     | 0.38                           | \$47.51          | 98,830           |
| Outpatient Care Centers                        | 6,520      | 0.93                           | \$48.84          | \$101,600        |
| Colleges, Universities. & Professional Schools | 2,330      | 0.08                           | \$44.00          | \$91,530         |
| Federal Executive Branch                       | 2,290      | 0.12                           | \$41.08          | \$85,450         |

Figure 6. National Industry Profile<sup>5</sup>



**Figure 7. Bureau of Labor Statistics<sup>5</sup>**

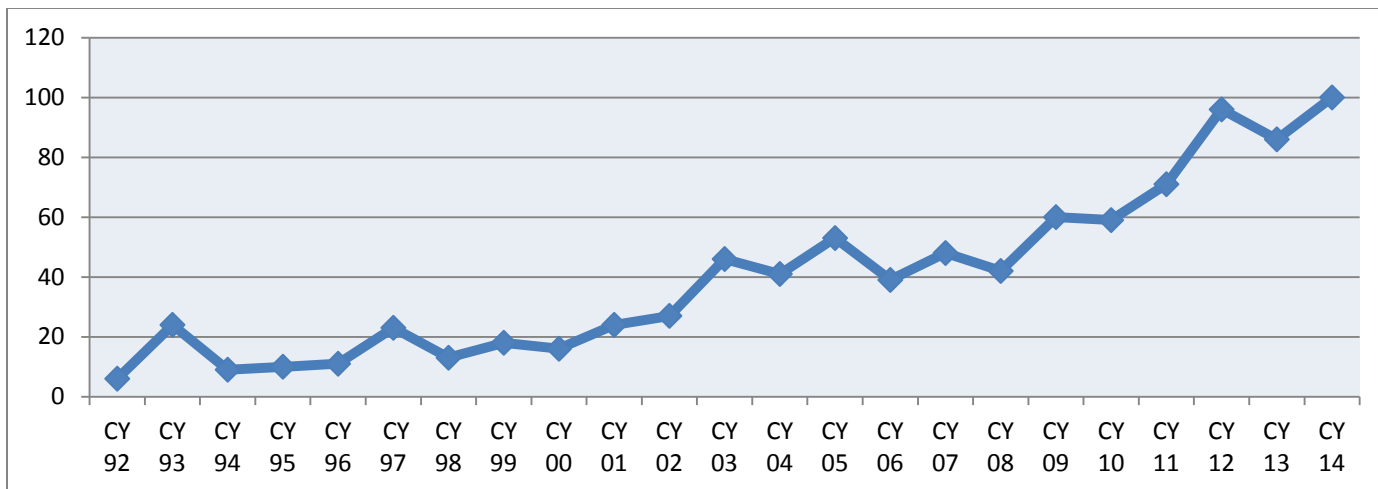
### **Expansion of the Profession**

The number of new licensees in Missouri has increased considerably between the years 1992 and 2014 (6 new licensees compared with 100). Figure 8 details the progression throughout the years. As of 6/15/2015, there were 67 new licensees in Missouri.<sup>10</sup>

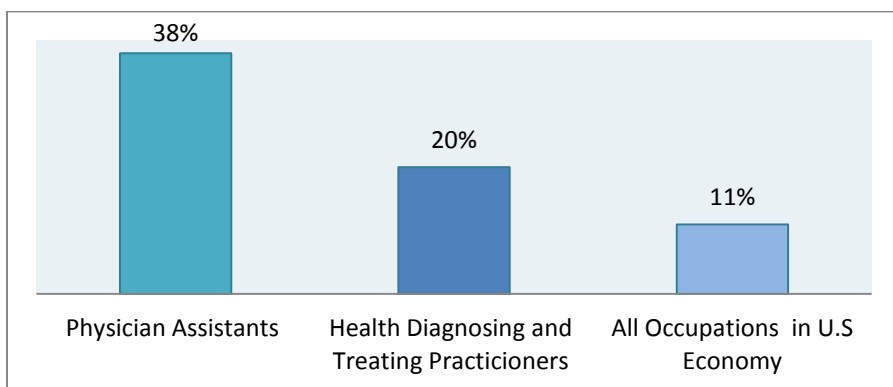
Employment is projected to grow from 86,700 PAs to 120,000 (38%) by the year 2022, which is much faster than the majority of other occupations (Figure 9). This is attributed to both the increasing age of the population and the rise in various chronic diseases which in-turn requires more health care. In addition, PAs who have the ability to carry out many of the services a physician does are expected to assume a more elaborate role in providing routine care due to the fact that they are more cost effective than doctors.

As PAs are allowed to execute more procedures, more physicians retire or move to specialty areas, and more insurance companies expand their coverage of PA services, the role is expected to continue to grow at a rapid pace. PAs employed in medically underserved and rural regions are expected to have the highest escalation in employment.<sup>7</sup>





**Figure 8. Annual Number of New Licensees<sup>10</sup>**



**Figure 9. Projected Employment Growth<sup>7</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> American Academy of Physician Assistants. Accessed June 2015 at <https://www.aapa.org/>.

<sup>2</sup> American Academy of Physician Assistants. *Statutory and Regulatory Requirements for Licensure and License Renewal*. Accessed June 2015 at <https://www.aapa.org/WorkArea/DownloadAsset.aspx?id=599>.

<sup>4</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. *May 2014 State Occupational Employment and Wage Estimates*. Accessed June 2015 at <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oesrst.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Employment Statistics*. Accessed June 2015 at <http://www.bls.gov/oes/current/oes291071.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> Bureau of Labor Statistics. *Occupational Outlook Handbook. Physician Assistants*. Accessed June 2015 at <http://www.bls.gov/ooh/healthcare/physician-assistants.htm>.

<sup>8</sup> Commission on Accreditation of Allied Health Education Programs. Accessed June 2015 at <http://www.caahep.org/Find-An-Accredited-Program/>.

<sup>10</sup> Missouri Division of Professional Registration. *Physician Assistants*. Accessed June 2015 at <http://pr.mo.gov/listings-heal.asp>.

<sup>11</sup> Missouri Revised Statutes. Chapter 334. Accessed June 2015 at <http://www.moga.mo.gov/mostatutes/chapters/chapText334.html>.

<sup>12</sup> United States Census Bureau. *State and County QuickFacts*. Accessed June 2015 at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/index.html>.